R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 019 277 TE 000 427

"NEW ENGLISH" METHODS COURSES AND THE ETPS GUIDELINES.

BY- SMALL, DONALD DAVID

PUB DATE 68

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.36 7P.

DESCRIPTORS- *COURSE CONTENT, *ENGLISH EDUCATION, *METHODS COURSES, *TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM, *TEACHER EDUCATORS, ENGLISH INSTRUCTION, TEACHER BACKGROUND, CURRICULUM PLANNING, PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT, COLLEGE INSTRUCTION, INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF, LISTENING SKILLS, LITERATURE, PROFESSIONAL CONTINUING EDUCATION, GRAMMAR, COMPOSITION (LITERARY), READING, METHODS TEACHERS, ORAL EXPRESSION,

FOLLOWING THE GUIDELINES SET FORTH BY THE ENGLISH TEACHER PREPARATION STUDY (ETPS), 17 ENGLISH EDUCATION SPECIALISTS IDENTIFIED TWO MAJOR CONCERNS REGARDING METHODS COURSES--(1) THE CONTENT PRESENTED AND (2) THE BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF THE INSTRUCTOR. SPECIFICALLY, THE CONTENT OF METHODS COURSES MIGHT INCLUDE--(1) ENGLISH METHODS HISTORY, (2) GRAMMARS, (3) ORAL COMPOSITION, (4) LISTENING SKILLS, (5) WRITTEN COMPOSITION, (6) READING, (7) LITERATURE, AND (8) PROFESSIONAL AND CONTINUING GROWTH. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE "KENTUCKY ENGLISH BULLETIN," VOL. 17 (1967-68), 16-21. (MM)

ED019277

Kentucky English Bulletin

TE 000 427

RHETORIC IN COMPOSITION
PROBLEM PRONOUNS
TEAM TEACHING: HOPKINSVILLE
REFERENCE LIBRARY IN LANGUAGE ARTS

Volume 17 Winter 1967-68 Number 2

Published by the Kentucky Council of Teachers of English

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"NEW ENGLISH" METHODS COURSES AND THE ETPS GUIDELINES

DONALD DAVID SMALL
Western Kentucky University

Kentucky's twenty-four teacher training institutions are coming to realize a tremendous opportunity to fulfill the new English Teacher Preparation Study guidelines in English education printed in the fall issue of the *Bulletin*. Because of their size, many Kentucky colleges have confined the methods phase of teacher preparation to a general methods course. New enrollments, however, are making possible the inclusion of special methods courses in many disciplines. In this respect Kentucky has a tremendous opportunity. It has a chance to provide special methods instruction in English according to newer, less ossified patterns of teacher preparation.

ETPS Guideline VI proposes certain objectives for the methods course. What might we consider as the legitimate content of a "New English" methods course? In a recent study 17 nationally recognized English education specialists agreed on two major con-

siderations: one, the content presented in the methods course; and two, the background and professional preparation of the instructor.[1] Conant spoke of the need for the "Clinical professor," who is a master not only of the subject matter but of learning theory and practice as well. The content of the methods course will vary but it might well include the following considerations listed by the English education specialists mentioned above.

English Methods History. The differences between "old method" and "new method" should be explained. Students should know that there were certain valid criticisms of methods courses in English which taught "tricks" and "techniques" such as the correct way to enter a classroom, the correct way to erase a chalkboard, and such other trivia, hardly a legitimate body of an academic discipline. The student should be made aware that new method is based on a concept of unifying content and technique; that the one cannot be considered without the other; that the two are somehow unified.

Certain practices in the English classroom are based more on mythology than on knowledge, and methods instructors should make students aware of where these myths lie. For example the student should know that the former practice of studying grammar as an aid to disciplining the mind is an outgrowth of a quaint historical theory and nothing more; that dependence upon the quantity of writing—"a theme a week"—is now regarded as a questionable practice; that research has proven that sentence diagramming is an unsupported type of verbal tinkertoys; and that the study of grammar and grammatical terms will not assist students in becoming better writers. In short, we want our students to have a defensible perspective on English education. Then he will, we hope, recognize the difference between the classroom mythology and research-supported truth. In so doing, he will stave off becoming an object of quaintness in his years of teaching, perhaps tolerated only because of a pleasant manner. Friendliness, lacking the marriage-partner of competence, produces no academic offspring.

Grammars. It is not enough for the prospective English teachers of Kentucky to "take a stand" on one type of grammar theory or another. Any teacher who considers himself a transformational grammar teacher, or a traditional grammar teacher, or a structural grammar teacher, needs to understand the concept relationship of grammars to English teaching. We need to develop English teachers

---

[1] Small, Donald D., *An Analysis of the Content of Twenty-seven English Methods Courses in Selected Indiana Colleges and Universities,* unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1967.

who are competent in the use of traditional grammars, structural linguistics, *and* transformational grammars in the classrooms of the state. Any teacher who cannot operate in all three grammars might shortly be consigned to teaching only in the Dens of Antiquity.

Prospective English teachers in Kentucky should have some familiarity with certain research findings in grammar as well. They ought to know that in 1938 Ellen Frogner proved that the "thought method" of teaching sentence structure was far more valid than a "grammatical term" orientation. In methods classes they should learn that in 1954 Ingrid Strom found that there is no correlation between a student's ability to parse sentences and his ability to write well. In addition, prospective English teachers ought to know that the burgeoning science of psycholinguistics ought to become a part of their continuing education in English.

Oral Composition. Formerly one of the most neglected areas in the English program was oral composition. The prospective English teacher should learn that his students' actual usage patterns in English are based on oral patterns and not on written patterns; hence, the use of workbooks and other written exercises, while they may provide one attack to the problem, often bypass the major issue of oral composition. In this area, English teachers should be taught valid procedures for providing for many different kinds of classroom discussion. Problems of sociolinguistics and dialect study, so relevant in a state that is becoming more mobile every day, need mention in the methods class. Oral composition is far more than a series of formal classroom exercises in speech-making and interpretation. Rather, it involves a maximum variety of student effort with a minimum of teacher direction.

Listening Skills. Prospective English teachers need to know about such background research indexes as Flanders' Interaction Analysis and Ewing's Listening Index which help to clinically analyze the actual classroom situation. Practice should be provided in such techniques as oral concert drill as well. Further, direction in the skillful use of listening tapes, now available for the secondary classroom, needs to be included as a part of the course.

Written Composition. Prospective English teachers should know that the concept of a theme a week advocated years ago by Conant was meant to be combined with a maximum classload of 100 students and critical analysis of student writing. Not only is the frequency of composition writing changing but the approach is also changing. Concepts of rhetoric such as *inventio, dispositio,* and *elocutio* are returning as a legitimate part of English education. In the methods class the prospective teacher might well plan a sequen-

tial writing program; a teacher does not merely assign composition topics in an unpatterned manner.

Certain aspects of written composition have been examined very closely in recent research. The English teacher should know, for example, reasons why we no longer mark compositions only with *sp, awk,* and *gr,* but rather write more detailed comments for the students. He should learn in his methods class that one of the major factors in improving student writing is not grammatical ability but the factor of reading ability. We know now what we did not know before: an increase in reading interest and ability level is somehow related to a corresponding increase in writing interest and ability level.

Reading. The implications for the growing importance of reading in the English classroom should be made clear to the methods student. The above-mentioned correlation of reading and writing improvement cannot be stressed too strongly. However, the prospective English teacher should also know his limitations. He should know that he is not a reading teacher, and that to be one requires special skills. A reading specialist is not created by handing an English teacher a reading kit. Nonetheless, he should be well acquainted with diagnostic and referral procedures.

Literature. The prospective teacher of English needs to know the dangers involved in adopting the concept of "coverage," especially with anthologies. Transitional literatures and other literatures especially appropriate to the junior high or middle school level ought to be presented to the prospective teacher. In addition work with paperback books such as that recently done by Daniel Fader might be discussed in detail in the English methods course. Our methods students need to know that pride of ownership is one of the major factors in the student interest in paperback literature. We know that the enthusiasm which we as teachers show toward a wide variety of reading materials in the classroom is contagious to the secondary school student.

Our prospective English teacher must know that certain trends in the study of literature are becoming justified by research. The idea of assigning an entire book to be read some three weeks prior to the first classroom discussion is one such practice. Another is the use of a three-pronged approach to literature, in which the student reads one book in common with the entire class, another in a small group setting, and still a third book on an individual study basis.

In the current deluge of books and materials, the English teacher must prepare to deal professionally with those who would attempt an illicit control of student reading. Methods instructors in English

have a massive obligation to provide prospective teachers with the means for combating forms of censorship by pressure groups or by individuals who would usurp professional selection of student reading. Considering the wealth of literature that students will read, our methods students can no longer dare go into the English classroom completely unaware of this professional problem. Specific channels of communication with professional organizations need to be outlined for novice teachers.

Professional Growth. The English methods instructor ought to provide his student with certain criteria for selecting those schools and English departments in which he can establish a professionally growing career. The professional reading of the English teacher requires current magazines as well as professional journals which will assist him to maintain competency in the field of English. Membership in the National Council of Teachers of English and the Kentucky Council of Teachers of English might well be started during the methods course. The many graduate fields within English education and the appropriate graduate programs might be discussed in the methods course.

As a further condition to the English teacher's professional growth, the "new English" methods course provides some information on the new militancy of teacher organizations. The prospective teacher should be given specific assignments in reading about the situations in which the NEA and the AFT often assist in creating professional growth opportunities. We can no longer ignore either of these organizations; the professional English teacher is inextricably involved in them.

Instructor Background. While the prior considerations are focused on the content of the methods course, obviously the instructor of the English methods course would have to have a background of successful teaching of many years in the secondary English classroom, preferably at a wide variety of levels and in different types of schools. In addition, the methods course instructor must have broad information about current research. He needs to be a research-oriented instructor, and needs to cultivate that same attitude in his methods students.

The professional competence of the methods course instructor includes a continuing contact with the secondary schools as well. Not a week should go by that this instructor is not in some way involved in a direct contact with some secondary school. Certainly his methods students need to be given opportunities to make lesson plans and unit plans, and make observations in the secondary schools. Yet a certain caution is necessary in this regard. If the in-

structor takes the prospective English teacher to an observation, he should be very careful to show examples of excellent teaching in terms of content and manner. Observations of sentence diagramming are a disservice. If need be, videotape facilties should be provided so that prospective English teachers can see examples of teaching excellence in all of the above-mentioned areas involved in English education.

We know from research findings that one of the criticisms students have of the English methods course is that there is often no relationship between the lesson and unit planning done for the course and the activities found in the student teaching sequence; methods instructors need to insure that the materials students prepare for the methods course will be used in their student teaching as well.

Continuing Growth. A final item in the professional competence of the methods instructor is continuing professional growth. The methods course instructor in English should belong not only to the NCTE and the KCTE, but he certainly ought to consider attending the annual Conference on English Education, a branch of the NCTE which is specifically designed to further the growth of those involved in English education. State organization of methods instructors might be considered. Illinois, Indiana and New York have recently organized state-wide groups of English methods course instructors to discuss common problems and approaches to English education.

We have come a long way from the English methods course that taught students to keep chalk trays clean and to erase with vertical strokes. If the teaching of English in Kentucky is to continue to grow at a maximal rate, one of the major stimulating factors will have to be the growth of the English methods course, for the traditional teacher is coming to be a contradiction in terms.